GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:111
ANSWERED ON:18.11.2002
UNITED NATIONS STUDY OVER TOXIC CLOUDS
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Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the United Nations sponsored study, revealing the presence of a three kilometer thick cloud, which was a toxic cock-tail of ash, acids, aerosols and other gases;

(b) if so, the details indicating the areas covered thereby; and

(c) the details of steps that have since been taken to detoxicate and dissolve the menacing clouds, in the context of the Earth Summit and the Convention adopted therein?

Answer

MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS(SHRI T.R. BAALU)

(a),(b) and (c) An international collaborative study `Indian Ocean Research Experiment (INDOEX)` has indicated haze over the Indiar Ocean. The haze is caused by high concentration of small particles known as aerosols which are primarily composed of soot, sulfates, nitrates, organic particles, fly ash & mineral dust. The haze is not a permanent feature of the atmosphere over the Asian region and the surrounding seas. It occurs only during January - March , the season in which INDOEX observations were made in1999Conclusive data are not available to co-relate the impact of haze on the monsoon and/or agriculture of our country. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has, this year, brought out a report entitled `The Asian Brown Cloud: Climate and other Environmental Impacts` based on INDOEX.The press release of the UNEP launching the said report paints an alarming picture of the impacts of this haze on both regional and global scales. However, most of the concerns expressed therein are not well substantiated by reliable modelling studies or experimental observations. The existing legal and policy framework, supported by several initiatives to protect and improve the environment, addresses the concerns of air pollution in the country.